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ABSTRACT

Lesson designs that have weak closure rob students of the most important part of the lesson--the time when they have the opportunity to think about and discuss what they have learned. This is the time in the lesson when students reflections is necessary for internalization of the skills covered. At the end of a lesson, a short concentrated time period of 5 to 8 minutes should be set aside to provide students with the opportunity to evaluate lesson content and to reinforce skills taught. Activities must be designed to maximize student input. Fifteen student-directed activities, 11 lesson-focused activities, and 11 teacher-directed activities are described. These activities are designed to stimulate teachers at all grade levels to think of more effective ways to complete lessons. (JDD)

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WINNING THROUGH STUDENT PARTICIPATION IN LESSON CLOSURE

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INTRODUCTION

Teachers, even the most experienced, often find "closure" to be the most difficult aspect of lesson design. A lesson that goes superbly to the point of closure can suddenly fall apart during the last crucial ten minutes. Often, teachers provide all the pertinent information to convey the concept, but then quickly conclude by assigning homework or telling students to get out the necessary materials for the next subject. As a result of a weak closure, or no closure at all, students are robbed of the most important part of the lesson -- the time when they have the opportunity to think about what they learned and to discuss it.

Educators have had a tendency to believe that the instructional body of a lesson is more important than what follows the lesson, but this is not necessarily true. Closure is needed to facilitate and enhance student accomplishment (Bailey, 1990). A Harvard Study concluded that time set aside for college students to summarize the salient points learned in a lesson substantially improves students' education (Schorow, 1990).

CLOSURE DEFINED

Closure generally takes place at the end of a lesson, but can occur at any time throughout the lesson when it is necessary to clarify key points and to ensure that students understand the lesson (Hamilton, et al, 1988). Hunter (as cited in H. Lee, 1990) explains that teachers must actively elicit feedback from learners during intervals within the

lesson. Closure is most appropriately used at the end of an instructional objective to determine if students grasped the significant concepts emphasized in the lesson. Bailey (1990) also contends that closure is a method to conclude an instructional concept or lesson. He views the purpose of closure as assisting students to summarize main ideas, evaluate class processes, make decisions regarding questions posed at the outset of the learning activity, and provide continuity between what occurred and what will occur in future lessons.

Closure is the process which allows the mind of the learner to summarize for itself what it perceives has been learned (Suzuki, 1985). "Closure helps kids know what they learned, why they learned it, and how it can be useful" (Phillips, 1987, p. 37). (Constable, 1992) states that closure gives the teacher and students the opportunity to reflect on the teaching and learning that has taken place. For the purpose of this article, closure is defined as "that time at the end of a lesson when a teacher wants to create an environment in which students can analyze what they have learned and be given the opportunity to explore their learning in greater depth."

THE IMPORTANCE OF CLOSURE

The effectiveness or ineffectiveness of closure often determines whether students have a positive or negative learning experience from the class presentation. It is the crucial part of the lesson which enables students to master the lesson's objectives. Since nothing

follows closure that relates to the objectives of the lesson, nothing interferes with students' retention of those objectives. Therefore, at the end of a lesson, a short, concentrated time period of five to eight minutes should be set aside to provide students with the opportunity to evaluate lesson content and to reinforce skills taught.

Students' participation in the closure process is critical to their assimilating and gaining a true understanding of the lesson. They must be active agents in analyzing what they have just learned. This is the time in the lesson when students' reflection is necessary for internalization of the skills taught.

Activities must be designed to maximize student input. Some closure techniques are more suited to a particular grade level, but students at all levels, kindergarten through college, profit from well-designed lesson closure. A few of the closure strategies listed may be better suited for a culminating activity at the end of a unit. Three categories of closure activities are provided for instructional use.

STUDENT-DIRECTED ACTIVITIES

1. Students ask questions of the group about the lesson. It is important that the students answer rather than the teacher. The idea is to achieve as much student input and interaction as possible.
2. One student interviews a neighboring student about what was learned in the lesson.
3. Students assume the role of teacher. They present the three chief details they would want students to know about in this lesson. This may be done verbally, in written format, individually, and/or in a group.

4. A student is assigned a "buddy" to teach the principle concepts of the lesson.

5. More sophisticated students may present a panel discussion of important lesson objectives (e.g., Reconstruction Era of the Civil War).

6. Students prepare a news report on what they learned in the lesson by answering who, what, when, where, why, and how.

7. Students write a postcard to their parents about what they learned that day in a particular class.

8. Students may list the pros and cons of an issue discussed in the lesson.

9. Students explain their position on a topic. Next, they present arguments to support the opposing view.

10. Group students and have each group prepare a class hand-out on what it thought were the main points of the lesson. Each group discusses its findings and explains why these points were selected.

11. Students may role-play a character or situation presented in the lesson. After the role-play, there should be a discussion of how famous people in history may have felt. A discussion may ensue about how history would be changed if the person had acted differently.

12. Students discuss how the lesson is relevant in their lives.

13. One student leads a semantic mapping activity by writing a phrase or concept talked about in the lesson on the chalkboard or a chart. Other students write words that relate to the phrase around it.

14. A student lists and discusses principle points of the lesson with the class on the chalkboard, felt board, flip chart, or transparency.

15. Students question the teacher about some aspect of the lesson they would like to know more about.

LESSON-FOCUSED ACTIVITIES

1. Students design a five-question quiz about the lesson. At least two questions should begin with "Why" or "How." Students answering the questions must explain their answers.

2. Students write in a journal each day about two things they learned that day in a subject.

3. Each student writes a paragraph explaining to someone who knows nothing about the subject what was just learned in the lesson.

4. Students name examples of a concept discussed. They must explain why their example is accurate.

5. Students further research the lesson's topic. They compare their findings to what the teacher presented.

6. Students are given a pair of footprints on which they write prime objectives learned in class. These might be displayed around the room to be occasionally referred to throughout the year.

7. Students summarize designated parts of the lesson by sequencing delivered information.

8. Students make a time line of events.

9. Students write in detail the steps in a procedure. (e.g., steps to solving a math problem or a science experiment)

10. Students view a film. At the conclusion of the film, they write or draw a picture that summarizes what was discussed.

11. Element of Surprise: Students are given an envelope. Inside there is a card with a word or phrase selected by the teacher on it. Students discuss this concept in new terminology.

TEACHER-DIRECTED ACTIVITIES

1. Videotape the lesson. Play a segment of the lesson. Turn down the volume. Have the students become narrators.

2. Credit Cards: Distribute index cards. Require each student to record a specific statement of what the lesson's objectives were. Each student gets credit for correct responses. This credit applies toward a reward.

3. Numbered Heads Together (a cooperative learning technique): Students, in groups of up to five, are numbered sequentially. They think of three things learned in the lesson. After group discussion, the teacher calls one number from each group. The student represented by this number in each group stands and tells one thing the group has learned.

4. Jeopardy: The teacher gives the answer. Students provide the question.

5. Think, Pair, Share (a cooperative learning strategy): Have students think about what they just learned. Pair students and have them discuss what they learned. One partner shares their

consensus with the class.

6. An actual object or model is shown that directly relates to the lesson. Students predict the relationship between the present lesson and future lessons.

7. Stumping the Stars: Desks are turned so both halves of the classroom face each other. One group asks the other group three questions. Students get thirty seconds to answer. Reverse the teams. If a team cannot answer a question, they must research it and present the answer to the class the next day.

8. The teacher asks the class to think about what they learned in the lesson and to think about the process. The class is asked to list the process starting with what happened last and moving forward to what happened first.

9. The class discusses why the information learned in the lesson is important to know and when and how they will use this information.

10. Students write the major points of the lesson on paper. Then, the teacher summarizes the major points of the lesson on a chart or the chalkboard. Students compare their conclusions with that of the teacher.

11. Students are grouped and given blank index cards on which to write four open-ended questions about the lesson. Two students are selected from the whole class to come forward, draw an index card from the pile, and randomly call on a student to answer the question -- hands are not raised. The two students will probe the student who is answering to explain similarities and differences, provide examples, compare, contrast, and link concepts and situations.

SUMMARY

The inclusion of closure in each lesson is obviously essential. Examples of closure activities have been offered to help teachers add variety and yet be effective when concluding a lesson. Student-directed, lesson-focused, and teacher-directed activities should stimulate teachers at all grade levels to think of more effective ways to complete lessons.

The end of the lesson should not allow for "throw away time." It should not be a time for students to read what they want, finish other work, or start homework.

Effective closure allows students the opportunity to reflect on what they have learned. They must be given the opportunity to actively participate in closure. The teacher serves to guide the students in their discussion of the lesson, to probe and stimulate student thinking, to keep the discussion focused on the lesson objective, to ensure that all key lesson elements are discussed, and to bring the discussion to the best possible conclusion.

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